

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A method for passivating the contact surface of a refractory container made mainly of mullite, wherein said refractory container is configured to receive molten titanium, which comprises the following operations:

- a. applying to the contact surface a coating comprising 50% to 70% by weight of alumina flour (Al_2O_3) filler and 30% to 50% by weight of binder, said binder comprising 50% to 60% by weight of aluminum chloride AlCl_3 dissolved in 40% to 50% by weight of water;
- b. drying said coating;
- c. firing the container in an oxidizing atmosphere between 1450°C and 1550°C for at least 20 minutes thereby obtaining a coating on said contact surface of said refractory container that is inert to said molten titanium; and
pouring molten titanium on the coating of the mullite container.

Claim 2 (Original). The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the coating also comprises a water-soluble organic dye.

Claim 3 (Original). The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein the dye is methylene blue in a total proportion of 0.1% to 0.5% by weight.

Claim 4 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the coating comprises 50% to 55% by weight of alumina flour (Al_2O_3) filler and 45% to 50% by weight of binder, and wherein said coating is applied by air brush.

Claim 5 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in one of claims 1 to 3, wherein the coating comprises 55% to 70% by weight of alumina flour (Al_2O_3) filler and 30% to 45% by weight of binder, and wherein said coating is applied by brush.

Claims 6-8 (Cancelled).

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said dye is a pyrolyzable organic dye.

Claim 10 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said firing is performed such that a rate of temperature rise and a rate of temperature fall remain less than 300° C per hour.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said oxidizing atmosphere is ambient air.

Claim 12 (New): The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said firing is performed for less than one hour.